



# Sustainability Commission

Economy • Environment • Society

*Think long-term, act now*

“Community Sustainability is the commitment to adopt practices that support and balance the social, economic and environmental aspects of our region, now and into our future.”

Groton Sustainability Commission, Winter 2010

## Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, September 25, 2012

**Meeting Time:** 7:30 PM

**Meeting Location:** Selectman’s Meeting Room Groton Town Hall

**Meeting Type:** Regularly Scheduled Commission Meeting

**Minutes Written By:** Leo Laverdure

**Commissioners in Attendance:** Mike Roberts, Carl Canner, Carl Flowers, Leo Laverdure, Susan Daniels

**Commissioners Absent:** Chris Christie, Lisa Wiesner

**Public in Attendance:** Helene Cahan, Scott Harkin, Maria Hars, Carol Quinn, Rosemary (last name not recorded) a representative of Woodward and Curran (the firm doing the analysis/engineering of the proposed Lost Lake Sewer project –), one other attendee (name not recorded)

### **Agenda:**

1. Presentation request Helene’s Stables – Fire Station Site
2. Lisa to present listing of short-term Commission projects/actions [postponed]
3. Seattle Happiness Initiative and Open Studio workshop
4. New Business not foreseen at the time of posting:
  - Carol Quinn, Lost Lake Sewer Project
5. Adjourn

Next meeting: Oct 23, 2012 [Note: We discussed meeting on 2-Oct-2012, but clearly this didn’t happen. I’m not sure when we are meeting next. Leo]

## ***Minutes for Agenda Items***

### **Item 1: Presentation request Helene’s Stables – Fire Station Site**

Helene Cahan (owner/operator of Helene’s Stables) asked the Commission to address four points regarding the sustainability of the proposed new fire station:

1. Since sustainability figures prominently in the Master Plan, does the Commission have a position on the sustainability of the proposed fire station?
2. What happens to the land if the station is not built? Will the land be restored to its protected status as agricultural land, or is it at risk for development?
3. Does the Commission have any comments on the high costs of the proposed fire station?

4. Our planet is sick. We need to hold on to land for agricultural use. This project is killing something important by not using developed land.

After a lengthy discussion, including several members of the public, the Commission was left with more questions than answers. Some of the more salient points:

- The Commission has no power to regulate in these matters, but we do review projects for their sustainability when asked. However, we may be a too late on this one, given the large amount of work that has already been done and dollars spent.
- It appears that the building is not pursuing LEED certification. The Commission would like to see this for large town projects.
- Scott Harkin noted that providing for the safety of town residents and property was an important part of sustainability. What is the tradeoff between this and other sustainability values?
- **Action:** Maria Hars will take a closer look at what is happening and report back to Mike Roberts.
- **Action:** Once we have more information, Mike will ask the Commission to evaluate the project from the point of view of each of the 3 legs of the sustainability “stool.”

### **New Business Added under Item 4: Carol Quinn, Lost lake Sewer Project**

The Lost Lake Sewer Committee has 3 articles on the fall Town Meeting warrant that they reviewed with the Sustainability Commission in an effort to garner our support for these articles. This project has strong sustainability goals - clean water, protection of our watershed, and enables economic development.

Carol distributed two sheets: a *Quick Review of Lost Lake Sewer Project* and *The Final 2011 Master Plan and its relationship to the Lost Lake Sewer Project*. She then proceeded to go over the information.

The commissioners had many questions, which she and Rosemary answered patiently and authoritatively. One of the questions was: “Why not process the water in Groton?” Carol answered that our sandy/gravelly soils didn’t hold the water long enough to allow the contaminants (phosphorous and nitrogen) to be trapped in the soil, so they entered the aquifer. A regional solution makes sense, given Ayer’s extra capacity. She also mentioned that Marion Stoddart was strongly in favor of the proposed solution.

**Action:** The Commission voted unanimously (5 – 0) to support the three Lost Lake Sewer Project articles in the Town Meeting warrant. Mike Roberts will draft a support letter and send it to the Lost Lake Sewer Committee via Carol.

### **Item 3: Seattle Happiness Initiative and Open Studio workshop**

This item was moved to the end of the agenda to accommodate our guests.

Mike distributed some materials from the conference he attended and made several points:

- The language of sustainability is changing to include a greater focus on positive values, rather than simply the absence of negatives. In particular, there is a growing emphasis on improving “happiness” (as in Bhutan’s national happiness metric) or “well-being” (the term used in Seattle, and favored by the Commission members). This is in contrast to the formulation of sustainability as the meeting of current needs *without* harming the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- **Action:** All. Please take the survey of the Happiness Initiative at [www.happycounts.org](http://www.happycounts.org)
- **Action:** All. Please review the distributed materials and come prepared to discuss these at our next meeting
- Also, Mike will be leading a group discussion in January (2013) called “Putting a Human Face on Sustainability” (1-page description distributed, available from Mike). He will announce the date once it is determined. Please consider attending.
- Mike (I think, but it may have been someone else) recommended that we read Eric Weiner’s *The Geography of Bliss: One Grump’s Search for the Happiest Places in the World*, which he described as “a great book.” For more info, you can start with: <http://www.ericweinerbooks.com/books/the-geography-of-bliss/description/>.